

P 051950Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2989
INFO WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
DIA WASHINGTON DC
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
SECNAV WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000127

SOUTHERN COMMAND PLEASE PASS TO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
DIRECTORATE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2029

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: PLAN FOR ENGAGEMENT ON AIRCRAFT CARRIER
MOVE TO MAYPORT, FL

REF: A. 08 BUENOS AIRES 571

[B](#). 08 BUENOS AIRES 961

[C](#). 08 BUENOS AIRES 974

[D](#). 08 STATE 76161

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (U) This is an action request for State and Southern
Command, see para 6.

[2](#). (SBU) Embassy Buenos Aires is concerned that the decision
to relocate one nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (CVN) from
Newport News, VA to Naval Station (NAVSTA) Mayport, FL, could
be either misconstrued by Government of Argentina authorities
or exploited by persons wishing to create a bilateral or
regional issue with the United States. Post believes we
should engage senior political leaders with an explanation
for the move and have a good public diplomacy strategy to put
in action.

[3](#). (SBU) The decision to homeport a CVN at Mayport will
attract attention and likely concern here because it will be
co-located with the headquarters of the 4th Fleet even though
it will be assigned to the 2nd Fleet. Its geographic
association with the 4th Fleet will likely be read by those
suspicious of U.S. intentions as evidence that the 4th Fleet
will have a significant force projection capability intended
for use in Latin American waters, something that suspicious
minds here have argued already. We had an alarmist article
on the 4th Fleet and Peru carried in a leftist daily here in
recent days.

[4](#). (SBU) Background: The 2008 decision to reestablish the 4th
Fleet triggered significant expressions of concern from
several South American nations, including Argentina.
Argentine Minister of Defense Nilda Garre spoke several times
publicly about the Government of Argentina's concern that the
decision represented a case of U.S. unilateralism and that
the new Fleet represented a projection of U.S. force into the
region. President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK)
voiced concerns during bilateral talks (reftel C). Local
media sensationalized the story and have repeatedly
characterized the 4th Fleet as a U.S. response to challenges
to U.S. regional primacy from countries like Venezuela and
Ecuador. Even standard academic treatment of the issues in
local journals tends to refer to the 4th Fleet as part of a
U.S. response to Chinese or Russian strategic projection into
Latin America.

[5](#). (C) Background continued: Much of our response, both in
the press (including successful outreach by Admiral Stavridis
in Argentina) and in bilateral meetings with Argentine
Defense and Foreign Affairs officials, has been to emphasize
that the 4th Fleet would have no permanently assigned ships
and that its mission was to focus on capacity-building among
partners in the region and to deter foreign aggression (per
ref D). We also pointed to its possible role in addressing

natural or humanitarian disasters. Although we understand that the decision to homeport a carrier at Mayport has been made without reference to the 4th Fleet, that distinction will be lost for many here and some Argentines will be all too ready to see their suspicions confirmed.

¶16. (SBU) Action Request for State and U.S. Southern Command: Embassy will conduct diplomatic outreach to senior MFA and MOD officials to counteract possible concerns about the relocation of a carrier to Mayport. We encourage Department and Southern Command to develop additional talking points on the carrier move for our use with GOA officials, and as necessary the press, to avoid the misunderstandings that characterized the Argentine response to the establishment of the 4th Fleet. We believe it would be beneficial to do so in other regional capitals too. One of the reasons the President of Argentina became concerned for example was because Brazilian President Lula, in addition to President Chavez, raised concern at a regional leaders meeting.

¶17. (SBU) Elements of our backgrounder would include:

- A description of current 4th Fleet activities and planning, emphasizing its unique characteristics and its focus on collaboration and partnership (we welcome supplementary information on these topics).

- A description of our reasons for fleet dispersal, giving as well details on the grounds for choosing Mayport (to emphasize that they have nothing to do with the newly established 4th Fleet headquarters being there).

- A timeline for relocating the carrier.

- An invitation for host country civilian and military officials to visit 4th Fleet headquarters as part of upcoming visits to the United States.

¶18. (SBU) Embassy at present does not propose strong outreach to the press to avoid drawing attention to an issue that has not yet been picked up here. But we believe a PD strategy that is ready to launch will be needed here and elsewhere in the region. We propose that any information developed for transmittal to the government be drafted so that it is available for our use with the press in case any negative stories appear.

¶19. (SBU) We would of course welcome perspectives from other posts.

WAYNE